12: Douglas T-3 (1951)1953 AJ4 W. Tibetans AJ4

484 648 question whether he would return to Lhasa was still undecided. Pending that decision, the Chinese Army was waiting a respectful distance from Lhasa. When the Dalai Lama reached Lhasa on August 17, 1951, the Chinese Red Army moved into action. Communist contingents poured into Lhasa and then fanned out racing across Tibet to posts on its southern frontier. But until that date the border was open.

000 I had seen again and again between Baralacha Pass and Pagmur these fast-moving Tibetan horsemen going like the wind and armed with either rifles or revolvers or both. There were a dozen or so in some bands. None had molested us. But the idea grew that perhaps some marauding band might.

● 529 This night at Pagmur I learned more startling news from my new Army friends. There were somewhere in this region two hundred armed bandits who had raided for years in Sinkiang and Tibet but who had moved south as the Communist influence became strong up north. These were the famous Kasak bandits who for years had made their living by raiding. They would kill if they were resisted. But their pattern of raiding was only to run off all livestock, to seize all guns and ammunition, to take all the food of a camp, and then on a selective basis take what other articles of clothing or equipment suited their fancy.

000 The rifles of these Indian soldiers looked more and more comforting and appealing to me as the story of the Kasak bandits was related at Pagmur.

"When do you return to Leh?" I asked the officer.

"In the morning."

"What will you do when you reach Leh?"

"Be assigned to garrison duty."

"Isn't it more fun to be on the trail, camping out every night?"

"Yes, sir."

"Then stay with me. We'll all go to Leh together."

"But my orders read—"